

Fair and trade show exhibitors

Most consumers assume that when they attend trade shows, fairs, or home improvement seminars that all the businesses are reputable. This can be a very expensive assumption.

While many exhibitors are professional and reputable, there may be some who have little experience or skill, or some who intentionally look for potential victims to scam.

Avoid giving out information or entering into agreements that you could later regret.

Below are things to consider when at a fair or trade show:

Drawings and prize offers

Sometimes drawings for a free prize are held and everyone turns out to be a winner. Later, winners learn they have to pay money to get that "free vacation." Other times winners learn that they are required to listen to a high pressure sales pitch in their homes in order to get a free rug shampoo or some other prize.

Prize drawings are also a way for vendors to gather your personal info. Beware of giving out your address or phone number, as you

may be giving solicitors permission to call, text, or spam-mail you for telemarketing purposes. By giving such permission, the vendor can then legally contact you even if you are registered on the state or federal NoCall programs.

High pressure

Shows, fairs, and seminars serve a valuable function for consumers by displaying a great deal of merchandise and information. However, consumers would be wise to take their time and think things through, rather than signing any contracts or entering into agreements while still at the event.

Do not feel pressured to make a quick decision. Take the information home and review it at your own pace and comfort. Start by reviewing the complaint history of the potential contractor.

Consumers often check with the Bureau of Consumer Protection, the Better Business Bureau, or local trade associations for such reviews.

Consider asking family, friends, and co-workers whom they would recommend or avoid. Ask what they know about your potential

contractor. Search the Internet for the company. There are multiple sites where you can see real reviews of potential contractors.

Selecting a contractor

When selecting a contractor, consider at least three different businesses and get three references from each business. Try to get one or two references from several years ago, to get a better idea of quality of materials and follow up service provided. If references will allow it, go see the contractor's work in person.

Reputable contractors enhance the beauty and value of a home. Unscrupulous contractors cost you money or cause damage to your home. But a contractor is not necessarily good or reputable simply because they advertise in the yellow pages, newspapers, radio or TV.

Cancellation rights

If you do enter into an agreement with a contractor at a trade show you may have 3 days to cancel. If the transaction is entered into away from the seller's normal place of business and is a cash or credit transaction that exceeds \$25, you have the right to cancel within 3 days. Doing your

research on a company and not signing under impulse or high sales pressure is still the safer route to go.

Free inspections

Do not assume someone offering a “free” inspection is a safe bet, and do not feel pressured because you accepted the free estimate. Shop and compare before making a commitment.

For more information

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

**Bureau of Consumer Protection
2811 Agriculture Drive
PO Box 8911
Madison WI 53708-8911**

**E-MAIL:
DATCPHotline@wi.gov**

**WEBSITE:
datcp.wi.gov**

(800) 422-7128

(608) 224-4976

FAX: (608) 224-4677

TTY: (608) 224-5058